

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

#44, July-August, 1982

Focus on Sexuality

Sexuality and God's Kingdom

Recently I had the opportunity to spend a day with Dorothy Payne at the New Berith, a house for women in transition, in White Plains, New York. Dorothy knows from personal struggle what it means to be female in the church: she is an ordained Presbyterian minister, she has been a feminist a long time, and in 1969 her book *Women Without Men* was a lone voice calling attention to the plight of single women in mid-life.

Because I was on my way to the Human Sexuality Study Committee meeting in Chicago [see News], we discussed the subject of human sexuality. Dorothy helped me to focus on sexuality questions within the larger context of the Kingdom of God. In other words, she discussed sexuality in the context of the "things of the Lord," as did Paul in I Corinthians 7.

Such an orientation lets us take seriously questions of our sexuality, yet at the same time it guards against an obsessive preoccupation with our sexual selves. Such emphasis deems the marriage bond good, yet finds Paul's preference for singleness for the sake of the Kingdom at least understandable in our day. Such a stance values the goodness of sexuality in its various aspects, yet is able to pass judgment on present-day fixation on the sex act.

All this is not to argue that it is somehow frivolous to discuss questions of human sexuality. Indeed, these questions gain relevance because they are so closely linked to Kingdom concerns. If being female continues to be a painful burden to many (witness past and some present ignorance of female sexuality, sex stereotyping, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, pornography, or simple trivialization), then the church as agent of the Kingdom had properly concern itself with the issues.

David G. Owen in a sermon—it's a sermon worth reading—in *Daughters of Sarah* (May/June 1982) asks: "How can we know if the kingdom of God is actually coming? Why not look around and see if there are formerly bent-over women standing up?"

Thanks, Ruth Krall, Willard Kraybill, Phyllis Collier, and Ethel Yake Metzler for stimulating our thinking — Herta Funk, Director of Adult Education, General Conference Mennonite Church, and compiler of features for this Report.

Development of Sexual Ethics:

by Ruth Krall

As Christian women in the Anabaptist tradition it seems appropriate that we claim our role as discerning members of the faith community. Although most biblical scholarship and theology construction in the area of sexual ethics has traditionally been done by men, our Anabaptist faith heritage provides us, as women, with a basis for claiming our believer's priesthood. As women we are called to a faith responsibility to join with our brothers in faithful study and discipleship.

In the area of sexual ethics there are prior questions which need to be considered before we attempt to define a normative code of accepted sexual behaviors in particular situations. Before it is possible to develop a tentative statement of sexual ethics for Mennonite women in this historical moment, we must address and begin to resolve these foundational issues.

What follows, then, is a road map to some of the territory. Unlike a topographic map which shows each spring and hilltop, this map shows only a broad sketch of the terrain which we need to navigate as we are en route to the development of a sexual ethic for current generations of Mennonite women. Some of these underlying issues are identified in the following paragraphs. They are only sketched out; they are not drawn in full perspective.

1: The Biblical Interpretation Issue

We must decide as a particular community of faith the direction that we are going to take in doing biblical scholarship. Our congregations and our institutions are divided on this issue. Since the 1960's it has been known and recognized that biblical interpretation is a divisive issue among us.¹ The impact of fundamentalism and the electronic church have created congregational environments in which God's revelation is seen as a closed, historical process.

The Anabaptist vision of congregations as discerning communities appears to exist in only a few isolated communities. Because our Anabaptist heritage roots all social ethics in biblical teachings, we must together decide if we are going to base a contemporary sexual ethic upon an Anabaptist vision of biblical interpretation or upon the more contemporary one of fundamentalism. I do not believe we can (or should) further

The MCC Peace Section Committee on Women's Concerns (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.

suppress this disagreement that exists throughout Mennonite church life. It is important that we recognize the premises upon which ethical teaching is built. As our theologians and scholars write about sexual ethics, we should ask of them which premises they hold for doing biblical study and for writing Mennonite ethics.

For the early Anabaptists the congregation was a voluntary association of adult believers. As such each congregation was expected to be a discerning community. In its daily life the community was to practice textual study. The written Word of God was always to be illuminated by the internal Word of God through the Spirit's testimony. As the community obeyed the Spirit's leading, new illumination occurred. In this manner the outer Word of the text and the inner Word of the Spirit came to life and was embodied within the community. By this process the faith community was freed from bondage to the traditions and interpretations of previous generations. The need of the present moment for spiritual guidance was able to be recognized. The Spirit's contemporary act of revealing is always possible. The necessity, then, is for the Bible to be freshly interpreted within each new generation. Of this process John Howard Yoder writes: "The community's hermeneutic authority is binding for that time and place; at the same time it remains permanently open to review if the same process of admonition again be initiated when another brother claims new light or reports a new offense."²

If we women of the Anabaptist tradition choose to claim an Anabaptist understanding of Scripture, several results are likely to occur. We will actively take to the faith community that which we understand to be a new light. We will report that which is offensive. Women's stories, as part of the faith community's story, may, for the first time, be included in the community's discerning dialogues. As women claim the priesthood of faith, they will be freed to study and to speak. As fully-accepted members of the redeemed, discerning community, women and men will recognize that women have a faith responsibility to speak to the testimony of the Spirit. Women will be freed to witness to the inner Word as they experience it. Women will begin to recognize the sinfulness of their silence and hiddenness within the community. As women bear testimony to that which they know, a more holistic life ethic can emerge for the complete community of faith. This complete community will be made up of all the adult believers, female and male. The Inner Word will be freed to speak within the community.

2: Cultural and Religious Ideas of Sexual Wholeness

Sexual wholeness for single persons and for coupled ones needs to be discussed. Too often our discussions about sexual wholeness are particularistic and related to a phenomenon which is outside of our own experience. For example, much of the literature of sexual ethics is written about acceptable sexual expression for singles. Most of this literature is written by married men. Yet these same men do not comprehensively write

about sexual ethics and sexual wholeness for married men. We must communally recognize the inadequacy of a sexual ethic which primarily deals with negative proscriptions for the young or for the unmarried.

One of the ways in which women may make a unique contribution to the development of a viable sexual ethic is to be found in story-telling. As women learn to value themselves and other women they may be able to both speak and hear the wisdom which is present in their own experiences. As women learn to trust the safety of confiding in other women, they may learn that together they are able to construct a sexual ethic for women which can help them in particular sexual decisions.

Issues of sexual violence must be confronted among us. Whether inside the marital relationship or outside of it, issues of rape, incest, and battering must begin to be addressed by Mennonite women and the total community of faith. Present cultural expectations about the proper role of male dominance and the sexual ownership of women by men open the potential of sexual violence to all women. Sexual wholeness cannot include a dominant oppressive status or a submissive victim one. We must begin to bear testimony to this in all of our discussions about female or male sexuality.

3: Male Dominance and Female Subordination

A patriarchal world view has been perpetuated inside and outside of the Western religious traditions. The long history of Christian teaching in the area of sexuality needs to be taught. We must choose that which we will keep and that which we will disclaim. As a part of this process women need to learn what the church fathers have written about women's sexuality. In some ages of the church a menstruating woman was asked to absent herself from the communion table because of the uncleanness. Women need to know that many of the church fathers taught that women's bodies were inferior and suited only to reproduction. Aquinas saw women's bodies as the incubators of the complete male seed. Augustine writes, "If it is asked why this helper [woman] was created, it is probable that there is no other reason than for the generation of children, just as the earth is a help to the seed. ...For if woman were not created to produce children, for what other help would she be made? ...Therefore, I cannot see how women should be made a help to men except by childbearing."³

We must, through discussion with one another, decide what contemporary faith requires of us as a theology of women's bodies and women's sexuality.

4: Political Issues Inherent in Sexuality, Ethics, and Biblical Interpretation

In each of these areas powerful human authorities can choose to mandate an absolute.

Until we recognize the communal, and, therefore, political nature of each of these areas, any writing in sexual ethics will be incomplete. Implicit in this concern is an awareness that until women are full participants in all areas of church life, church teachings will be incomplete. This is especially true in discussions of sexual

ethics. We must consider whether we will develop an essentially privatistic sexual ethic for individuals or whether we will develop an understanding of the role of sexuality in the spiritual life of the faith community. In other words, we must decide if we will think in categories of specific, individual sexual sins or in terms of the community's heritage and future. If we think in terms of the community, it is clear that female voices must be included in the formulation of these sexual ethics.

5: Conclusion

I have suggested that it is premature to raise questions of a Mennonite sexual ethic until we consider some of the underlying issues which are present for us in this contemporary moment. The issues of proper biblical scholarship, contemporary visions of female and male wholeness, and a culture-wide patriarchalism must be confronted as part of a sexual ethic formulation. In addition, we need a growing awareness that political issues are present for women in ethics, in biblical scholarship, in the personal experience of sexuality.

An underlying premise of this sketch or map has been that women are capable of doing the critical and

intellectual work of ethics development. I believe, also, that we should do this study and work communally. One potential form of our own scholarship lies in storytelling and in story collation. As we describe that which we know and that which we have experienced, we may make an enduring contribution to the historical life of the church. Certainly we will make a permanent contribution to the life of our sisters who live in contemporary history with us. I believe we must get on with this task.

Notes

¹ Kraus, C. Norman. "American Mennonites and the Bible." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 41 (4), October, 1967.

² Yoder, John Howard. "Hermeneutics and the Anabaptists." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 41 (4), October, 1967.

³ Augustine. *City of God*, 14,26, quoted in Phipps, William E. *Influential Theologians on Wo/man*. Washington, D.C. University Press of America. 1981.

Ruth Krall is a former faculty member of Goshen College, and is now in graduate school in Claremont, California.

Willard Krabill on Intimacy

What is intimacy? I looked the word up in both the glossary and the index of eleven sexuality texts. It wasn't listed in any of them. I had to turn to the dictionary, where one finds words such as "familiarity," "friendship," or "privacy" to define intimacy. Various writers have described it as "mutual understanding, acceptance, closeness". Harold Bauman defined it: "Intimacy is the experience of a close sustained familiarity with another's inner life; it is to know another person from the inside". The problem is that so many people define intimacy by only one of its dimensions—sexual intimacy—whereas, in reality, the craving for intimacy can be realized and satisfied only by a relationship which is closer than just the physical.

Intimacy is not the same as sexual intercourse. Intimacy is closeness. Intimacy is meaning. Without true intimacy, sexual intercourse is often "distancing" and not uniting. There are non-sexual friendships, believe me, that outshine some sexual relationships when it comes to intimacy. When it comes to developing closeness and sharing true knowledge of the other person from the inside, much of what passes for sexual relationship in our world is not an intimate relationship, but rather is nothing more than mechanical stimulation of genital nerve endings. And, that doesn't fulfill our need for intimacy.

True intimacy requires more than communication. It requires **commitment**; the kind of loving commitment that keeps the friend, or the partner, or whomever, present and involved, caring and loving, over time. This kind of intimacy keeps two people together not just when the road is smooth and maybe sensuous but also when the road is rough and sweaty. This kind of loving takes time. One cannot fall into it and out of it in rapid succession.

We are created male and female—for relationship. What we all really need are some intimate relationships. Sexual intercourse we can live without, intimacy we cannot live without. "Relationship" is the fundamental dynamic in our universe: our relationship to God, relationship to self, relationship to each other.

True intimacy costs something. It is foolish to imagine that one can enter into a close friendship or relationship with another without it costing us. True intimacy takes time. There are no shortcuts. There is no "instant intimacy" in this world. It takes too much time for us to think that we can develop true intimacy with a lot of people. We have time to develop that kind of a relationship with only a few. True intimacy also requires the surrender of some independence. But remember when we're altogether independent we're also very alone.

Coitus is not intimacy, but can be a dimension of it. Yet coitus is the only dimension of intimacy that many people experience. And when this is true, even this dimension will end in disillusionment, for to overburden intercourse with our real need for emotional intimacy, for the expression of all kinds of feelings, for overcoming loneliness, for finding fulfillment in life, and to feel needed and important, is to ask far more of intercourse than it can sustain.

We **are** sexual; we were created sexual; we have no choice. Sexual intercourse is but one kind of sexual relationship—a special kind. But we **do** choose whether or not to be intimate. After we consider who we are, after we consider the cost, after we consider the time required, after we consider the worth of the one we prize, we can and should develop intimate relationships. To be sexual—we are. To be intimate—we can be. We can live healthily without genital relationships. What we can-

not do without is some kind of reciprocal sharing of life experiences with someone else, whether male, female, married, single, old, or young. —Excerpted from a talk given at Goshen College

Willard Kraybill is a physician in Goshen, Indiana.

The Best in Women's Health Care Books

by Phyllis Collier

Prior to the seventies most of the books and other materials regarding women's health care were written by health professionals. Frequently, titles began with "A Doctor Talks About. . ." or "What Every Woman Should Know About. . .," connoting that information was being revealed by a voice of authority. Much of the information presented was from a male perception of the female experience and at a level deemed "comprehensible" by women.

Issues related to health care were a major part of the women's movement. The need for basic information about bodily functions, increased participation in decisions related to their health care and options related to such things as reproductive choices, childbirth experiences, and surgical procedures—all were clearly articulated. Several other problems were identified: (1) There were major gaps in the research on female health. After millions of experiences with menstrual cramps, was "It's only in their minds" all that could be said? Why was the federal government spending millions to discover why males have a high mortality rate from heart attacks and other cardiovascular disease, yet ignoring the fact that females have a far better record of "heart success?" (2) The professional literature for educating health care providers was often biased in its view of women. When medical texts described menopausal women as "mere caricatures of their former selves," or stated that a couple's sex life was primarily governed by the male's libido, it was inevitable that the biases could only be perpetuated. (3) When women **wanted** to learn more about their health, few materials were available that presented technical medical information in understandable terms, or presented honest pros and cons regarding controversial treatment modalities. In addition, physical and emotional health-related experiences told by women from a female's point of view were lacking.

Our Bodies, Ourselves by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective was one of the first books to bridge some of these gaps. It is still regarded as an excellent book. (A few parts are dated; a new edition is in progress.) A plethora of women's health books has emerged during the past few years; some are excellent, others merely tell the old tales under new jacket covers. The following are a sampling of recent books which the author places in the former category. Some are written by sensitive health professionals (both male and female), others by women knowledgeable about their bodies and the health care system who feel it important to share this information. Most of the authors consider "health" in a broader sense of well-being; not just the absence of disease.

Stewart, F., Guest, F., Stewart, G., & Hatcher, R. *My Body, My Health: The Concerned Woman's Guide to Gynecology*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979. Written by three physicians and a health educator, this is one of the best popular books on female gynecological care. The section on anatomy and physiology includes (at last) a superb, understandable explanation of the female hormonal system. A large segment is devoted to birth control methods and common gyn problems such as cysts, infections, endometriosis, and menstrual cycle irregularities. The pelvic exam and common laboratory screening tests are clearly described, as are surgeries and procedures for women such as laparoscopy, tubal ligation, D & C, hysterectomy, and abortion. The authors do an excellent job of translating technical material into lay language, and are not hesitant about stating where there are gaps in medical knowledge or controversies related to areas of care. Highly recommended.

Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers, A *New View of a Woman's Body*. New York: A Touchstone Book/Simon & Schuster, 1981. This book covers many of the same topical areas as *My Body, My Health*. As it was written by a women's health collective it has a strong focus on self-care for many common female health problems. The numerous illustrations and color photographs of women's body parts are outstanding, validating the fact that "normal" varies greatly among women. Includes a glossary of terms and a list of self-help clinics. The book is biased against certain birth control methods and procedures, but otherwise excellent.

Ayalah, D. & Weinstock, I. *Breasts*. New York: Summit Books, 1979. This unusual book was written after interviewing dozens of women. Females of all ages, ethnic groups, and vocational backgrounds talk about their feelings and life experiences regarding their breasts. Included are responses to societal and media attitudes about breasts, and experiences such as breast feeding and undergoing a mastectomy. The narrative is interesting and there are numerous black and white photos. Could be used as a teaching tool to demonstrate anatomic variations and breast changes throughout the life cycle.

Barbach, L. & Levine, L. *Shared Intimacies*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980. This is another book in which women share their experiences—this time regarding discovery of their sexuality, in both an individual way as well as with a partner. The authors are sexual counselors, and the book also includes their comments and suggestions related to common sexual concerns. Sample chapters are "Qualities of Good Sex," "Parents are Sexual, Too," and "Being Sexual in Your Later Years." Author Barbach's earlier book, *For Yourself: The Fulfillment of Female Sexuality*, is also an excellent one.

Fuchs, E. *The Second Season: Life, Love, and Sex for Women in the Middle Years*. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978. In the past, most books on health care for middle years women have been confined to the topic of menopause. This book contains much more,

beginning with role and developmental changes that frequently occur during this life stage. The segment on menopausal symptoms and how to deal with them is well done, and Dr. Fuchs poses thoughtful questions about the pros and cons of estrogen replacement therapy (ERT). Also included are general health care needs and risk factors for women of this age. This is a very positive book; and includes a wholistic approach to planning for middle and older years.

Sandelowski, M. *Women, Health, and Choice*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1981. This book was written by a nurse, and is geared more toward health professionals, although others might find it useful, too. The first half of the book contains content on health beliefs and behaviors of women, data related to their health status (health and disease statistics), and current health issues for women. Numerous studies are cited and the growing awareness of the uniqueness of women in these areas is focused upon. Other parts of

the book examine selected health concerns for women—such as menstrual cycle issues, violence against women, drug and alcohol use/abuse.

Marieskind, H. *Women in the Health System: Patients, Providers, and Programs*. St. Louis: C.V. Mosby, 1980. This book takes a critical look at both historical and modern-day health care services for women. It examines the impact of selected professional groups, technology, and the federal government in fostering a disease-oriented, intervention-laden approach to health care, especially in areas of care unique to women. Ways in which women can be more involved in both personal and system level decisions are suggested, and policies for a more health-oriented system of care for women are proposed. A strongly stated, but excellent book.

Phyllis Collier is at Gothic Temple, Stowe School, Buckingham, England.

Tunneling Through the Maze

by Ethel Yake Metzler

This title is, admittedly, a mixed metaphor: people work their way through mazes; they tunnel through mountains. The idea here of tunneling through the maze is that of finding one's way along the twists and turns of the sexual journey each individual cannot escape and, which literally and figuratively, often gets complicated by the sheer number of problems sexual relating creates. These difficulties pile up and the net effect is feeling down under—trying to dig out from under the mountain, or trying to catch a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

In marriage, the points in one partner's personal sexual journey where problems develop often coincide with problem times for the mate. When a partner fails to make viable choices during these periods, disillusionment, disappointment, dissatisfaction merge in sexual dysfunction. By the time a couple seeks therapy, their combined energies are often exhausted. Their sexual interaction has become an impediment to their living rather than a challenge and joy. The problems they present are diverse, both in nature and severity, as well as in disguise!

The burden for improving this condition often falls upon the female. Pick up any issue of any woman's magazine and you will encounter an article or two to challenge the women readers to kindle love's old fire, remove the boredom from their marriage, prevent their husbands from having affairs, on advice on developing deeper intimacy. Considered to be primarily concerned about relational issues, the female readers (supposedly) will be enticed by anything referring to love. Although we can commend these magazines for taking women more seriously than in the past, when food was touted as the way to a man's heart, we must be cynical and suspicious of the idea that partnership responsibility resides primarily or entirely with women.

The religious press offers a variety of paperbacks both more and less in tune with the idea of marriage being

the responsibility of the twosome. Variations on the themes of Christian sex, fighting fair, the joy of Christian love, these books often try to balance the ideas of responsibility and sex roles in sexual expression in marriage under rubrics of headship and mutual submission. Others such as the Penners' [see Book Reviews] guide the couple step-by-step to marital fulfillment, offering a healthy balance between encouragement and instruction from a well-developed biblical perspective.¹ In the last twenty years an ever-increasing number of secular books, magazines and texts on the subject of sexuality have appeared. Now libraries carry books for all ages.

Precisely because there is a plethora of literature on sexuality, many couples think they should be able to settle the issues that develop around their sexual expression by themselves. They feel embarrassed to seek help. Sometimes they fault themselves—sometimes each other—for not following the solutions which they think are so obvious, or which should be so easy. At times, one partner desires help, and the other refuses. Such an impasse tends to impact the relationship negatively, creating yet another level of disturbance. Men in our culture are expected to know about sex and, in a macho way, make certain that they perform to their wife's satisfaction. If problems occur, the male may become anxious, and the female may pick up the burden of responsibility to take care of the relationship, seeking help for herself in the hope that she can shift toward a more positive outlook.

When couples realize that the marital closeness which they desire is not being achieved and their efforts to solve the problems they have identified have not been successful, they do well to seek out a therapist skilled in marital issues who can guide them through the tunnel and the maze of their unfolding sexualities.

The following brief statements by partners seeking therapy illustrate the snags which complicate achieving sexual satisfaction. The net result of these: reduced sexual interaction, low levels of pleasure, diminished intimacy, and loss of well-being.

My spouse wants sex at the same time of the week, each week....My wife is so totally wrapped up in being a perfect mother, keeping an impeccable house, and trying to look her best that she cannot let go and enjoy sex....My wife doesn't know I fantasize about nudes when we have sex....My husband wants spontaneous sex—that is, when his body is ready. He thinks I should be always “on tap”....My spouse wants to divorce—the reasons are complex—but I don't want to....I used to like sex any time—almost—now I can take it or leave it—mostly the latter....My husband blows up and then tries to make love before we sleep....My wife thinks twice a week is often enough....My wife has had an affair, and I can't forget it....My spouse was sexually abused as a child and can't seem to love freely....My husband won't let me touch him—but he wants to touch me all over....My wife can't put housework aside to have sex....My husband eyes women's bodies....My wife does not want oral sex....My husband wants to go to x-rated movies....My wife won't try new positions....I have pain during intercourse....I am never sure that my wife has had an orgasm....My feelings about having sex have shifted and I'm bored by it and bored with my spouse....My husband ejaculates before I am even excited....I wish we would do more than watch TV, read, or do needlework of an evening—where has our sexual interest gone?....We're not young any more, but we still like sex. We wish people wouldn't think we are senile, amusing, or in some way soiled or dirty....We've been married three years and my husband still wants sex every night and sometimes every morning; I'm feeling used....My wife was raped, and I don't feel the same about her as I did, and she isn't interested in sex....I like to cuddle and hug, to feel close bodily—but my husband thinks this always has to end in intercourse....I don't know how to be assertive in marriage, let alone in making love, and I think this puts a burden on my husband; neither of us is happy with our sex life....I wish my spouse would talk more about our lovemaking; I feel very alone....I think being sexual should be more than having intercourse, but I can't get my spouse to understand....I want my husband to pay attention to me; I can't get interested in sex when he seems distant, preoccupied, critical or angry....My wife always has work for me to do; when I want to play, she can't be bothered....We don't really make love; I'm there for my spouse's self-gratification....We can't seem to agree on anything around being sexual with each other.

With these and other descriptions of their experiences of themselves and their spouses, couples begin to let the therapist hear what it is that they desire. This process of letting the therapist hear about themselves allows the couple to learn more about each other. It relieves the pent-up pressures of their sexual dissatisfaction that have robbed their relationship of justified expectations. As they talk about the discomfort, sadness, pain, and failures in their sexual lives, the therapist comes to understand their disappointments. They can let go of their resentments, anger, blaming, apathy, hopelessness, helplessness, distancing, and other negative consequences as they take positive action together.

Whatever the manifestation of lost connectedness—whether lack of arousal, fear of being pressured into acquiescence or performance, unsatisfactory orgasmic timing, impotence of vaginismus, or loss of desire—the therapist holds out hope for the couple. By accepting the complaints, wishes, statements of differences and preferences as indications of the partners' longing for understanding, acceptance, intimacy, and happiness, the therapist offers the idea of mutual understanding, cooperation, and respect as leading to adjustment and desired change. This stance of being positive and for both individuals models for the couple a new mental set.

Moving toward acceptance of each other and appreciation of the fact that each experiences the predicament of being an individual as well as a person, partners can begin to clarify their mutual and individual goals for their sexual expression. They learn to relax and feel more free to share their private hopes and wishes and affirm each other's differences.

The next step is to decide on the changes they are willing to make and to allow the therapist to coach them in seeking self-delight in the presence and with the activity of the other. Through careful selection of appropriate approaches, the therapist can assist the couple in the discovery of their own unfolding individuality in their sexual intimacy. In their love-making they can reach for new levels of communication, expression, and joy. Touches of humor, moments of surprise, and subtleties of closeness now arouse and delight, replacing worn-out routines of avoidance, confrontation, and complaining. They begin to sense again the mystery of being sexual together. They have renewed energies to explore the depth of their common separateness and can affirm, rather than deplore, the complexity of their sexual jointure.

Through this process the therapist hopes that the partners will gain new beliefs and skills to guide their communication and behaviors around sexual matters. One most important idea to be discussed and explored centers in the notion of personal freedom. If sexuality and its expressions are to be fully human, they must be entered into in full respect for each other's freedom. Force, whether physical or psychological, must be acknowledged in all its subtleties and different degrees of willingness recognized for what they are. Otherwise, the less willing partner experiences low-grade coercion. When this is not brought to awareness and talked through to satisfaction by both partners, distrust and dissatisfaction develop—leading to misunderstandings in what could have been a promising relationship.

Another important component of fully human sexual expression is each partner accepting responsibility for the self. This includes learning about one's body, its rhythms, its working and timing, its relation to one's mind and feelings; it must be assumed that the other partner does not know this information automatically. Men and women are different; within the sexes, individuals differ as well. Not to be cognizant of these differences is to diminish appreciation of one's self and the other and to set the stage for miscommunication, distrust, annoyance, aggravation. To take responsibility to learn through the many channels open

to those curious about themselves and others is to be on the stage of life with confidence and verve.

A third significant belief undergirds the Christian's approach to sexuality. It is the firm conviction that God's people are created female and male and that this play between completeness within separateness and singularity within jointure probably most reflects our divine origins of being created in the image of God. Couples willing to claim this for themselves can grant each other freedom for creativity as well as openness for assessment and reassessment of their participation in each other's lives. They can expect a relieving and revitalizing reciprocity as they engage each other's memories, imagination, fantasies, and capacity to grow as they live out their lives throughout the complexity of life's cycle.

Conclusion

In this article I have suggested that each person is set upon a life task of taking a sexual journey and that in

marriage, where journeys are joined, problems are the norm. When these pile up, the partners' experiences seem almost incomprehensible to each other, and sexual dysfunctioning may result. I have noted the comments of persons whose sensual expressions have been blunted, depleted, distorted, and decreased as illustrative of the differences and disagreements which can contribute to problems with sexual expressiveness. In a broad overview the major tasks of the therapist have been juxtaposed with the outcomes expected in the couple's sexual functioning. Finally, I have offered three primary beliefs which inform my work as a therapist and I suggest may be useful to couples as they plot their sexual journeys together.

1 Penner, Clifford and Joyce. *The Gift of Sex*. Word, 1981.

Ethel Yake Metzler works for Family Counseling Service of Elkhart, Indiana.

Book Reviews

Single Voices by Bruce Yoder and Imo Jeanne Yoder, editors (Herald Press, 1982), 128 pp., \$8.35. **Single Voices** is a valuable contribution to current concerns related to the meaning of single persons in the church and society and to the church's concept of family. The book can add to the recent discussion in **Living as God's Family**, one of the Foundation Series studies for adults.

This book focuses on needs and issues faced by single persons (never married and formerly married) within the context of the church. The seven chapters are written by seven persons, six of whom are single and one who lived most of her life as a single person. Each of these authors shares out of his/her personal, educational, and professional life. This is both a strength and a weakness of the book.

Strength comes through hearing directly from persons many of us know as they share their own pilgrimage. One of the questions raised in chapter two concerns the need for role models in our social structure. These persons are role models in their chosen professions and, through their contributions in this book, become role models for the larger church body.

They are role models in bringing biblical scholarship to their understanding of singleness as it relates to spirituality, sexuality, and the church. Their scholarship is appreciated in the chapters on Singleness and relationships, Singleness and the church, and Singleness in a married society.

A further strength of the book is the ability of the reader being able to identify with the authors. One example is in the chapter on professionalism (Rejection slips and spaghetti suppers), where the author talks about making the wrong decisions on the job and having to come home to an empty apartment.

He adds, "I do not have as naive a view of married life as to assume that one's spouse can utter magic words and make one's problems of the day evaporate. But I do believe that in a healthy marriage one can process one's ups and downs and put them in a broader context."

Chapters with a more "scholarly" approach, such as the ones dealing with sexuality, scripture, and the church, seem most complete. Weakness occurs when a person shares primarily out of personal experiences, thus presenting a limited perspective.

Chapter two, Single in a married society, is an illustration of this. The author writes: "Not only do singles need married persons; married persons also need singles." No elaboration follows on how and where interaction between single and married persons can happen.

The chapter on Singleness and spirituality (Holy loneliness) is somewhat inadequate in clarifying what is meant by "loneliness." The terms "loneliness" and "aleness" are used interchangeably; yet they are different, as the author attempts to point out at times. It seems he is saying that one has to work through the frightening experience of loneliness to the more positive, healthier truth of aleness, being at home with oneself. Possibly a more accurate subtitle of the chapter would be "Holy aleness."

Limitations of the book can become strengths by dealing with the questions raised by the book; most of them are included in the study guide at the end. The editors must be commended for this insightful and thought-provoking guide for individual or group study. Not only do singles need **Single Voices**; married persons also need **Single Voices**. —Eleanor Loewen, Director, Resource Center, Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Winnipeg.

The Gift of Sex. Clifford and Joyce Penner. Word, 1981. 352 pp. Paper \$10.95 (\$14.00). In recent years evangelicals have "discovered" sex—it's okay to enjoy it in marriage and to talk about it explicitly and openly. This has resulted in some superficial, even silly, books from the religious press. In contrast, **The Gift of Sex**, written from an evangelical perspective, combines sound science with a sensitive reverence for the responsible enjoyment of God's good gift of sex.

As a team of sex therapists and leaders of marriage enrichment seminars, Joyce and Clifford Penner are aware of the reticence, anxiety, and problems common in most marriages. With backgrounds in theology, psychology, nursing, and science, they move freely among those fields in their efforts to help readers acquire genuinely affirmative attitudes toward their sexual selves. They also draw upon the expanding literature in the newly developing field of sex therapy and use that information with critical discretion.

The thesis of this book is that sexual expression within marriage deserves to be enriched. They believe that making positive efforts to increase loving intimacy within marriage derives theoretically from creation theology and represents the overall biblical view regarding marital sexuality. In addition to devoting 12 pages to developing their biblical viewpoint, they quote liberally and appropriately from the Bible throughout the book, making more than 60 references to scriptural passages. They also trace their own spiritual pilgrimages from youth in rural devout Mennonite homes to service in Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches. They see present-day Christians seeking direction for joyous sexual expression. Whether newlywed or old timers, whether ho-hum or enhancement seeking, most couples, the authors believe, can profit from this book. I agree—especially those couples from a conservative or evangelical church background.

In short chapters, most less than ten pages, the authors offer short sections under boldface subtitles to carry the reader along. Graphs, outlines, illustrations, quotations, personal experiences and anecdotes serve as means for instructive and effective teaching. Particularly of note are the ink drawings of the differential anatomy of males and females which detail the essential apparatus of physical sexual expression. They could be useful for adolescents as well as adults in learning to know how their insides and outsides are organized relative to their gender.

Also valuable is the Penners' on-going recognition of the individual differences among members of any one gender. They point out the importance of this to sexual expression within a marriage, and urge the partners to be vocal about who they find themselves to be and what they enjoy, where their sources of anxiety lie, and how they are different from what folklore, or even this guide, might lead them to believe they could or should be.

Two critical points of evaluation must be mentioned:

1. Well-meaning and sincere, the information at times seems redundant and a bit patronizing. (The straightforward explicit sexual language is appropriate for this kind of discussion and should be helpful for those needing to enhance their sexual vocabulary in order to improve marital communication.)

2. I fault the authors' relatively consistent use of the phrase "entry into the vagina" with its inference that this is a male activity. Although a step forward from the formerly used "penetration" language, it is not truly descriptive of the cooperative nature of the activity. Other terminology would better suggest the mutual aspects of both male and female initiative in sexual joining.

Generally the authors hold forth the ideal that the marital relationship is of equals, one male and one female, who share equally the privilege and pleasure of their mutual sexual satisfaction. —*Ethel Yake Metzler in Provident Bookfinder*

Embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology is by James B. Nelson, professor of Christian ethics at United Theological Seminary, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. It explores ways our sexuality enters into our experience of Christian faith.

Nelson says that a double dualism exists in Christianity. One dualism is that between male and female. He calls this **sexist dualism** and says it has been prevalent in most societies throughout history including the Hebraic. The other dualism is the mind-body dichotomy which entered Christianity from Greek thought. Hebraic thought did not have this split. He names this **spiritualistic dualism**.

Nelson often refers to these two dualisms throughout the book to explain what is right or wrong with certain views. He states "because both sexist and spiritualistic dualisms have so plagued Christianity, many people have left the church to seek the wholeness of their sexual humanity elsewhere" (p. 73).

The material deals with specific situations such as premarital sex, homosexuality and the sexually disenfranchised (the physically disabled, the seriously ill, the aging, the mentally retarded).

He treats these fairly, giving a case for each view on them and his own. For example, he deals with homosexuality in depth and in a way that creates understanding of that orientation and the various views of it. You are left knowing his opinion as well.

The concluding chapters continue with a theological approach and yet have practical suggestions on how the church can handle the issues.

The reader may or may not agree with Nelson's personal stance and yet can learn a lot no matter what one's own view is. —*Marion Keeney Preheim, writer, Newton, Kansas.*

Resources

- Bailey, Derrick Sherwin. *Sexual Relation in Christian Thought*. New York. Harper and Brother. 1959.
- Bainton, Roland H. *What Christianity Says About Sex, Love and Marriage*. New York. Associated Press. 1957.
- Collins, Sheila D. *A Different Heaven and Earth*. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Judson Press. 1974.
- Daughters of Sarah*, 2716 Cortland, Chicago, IL 60647. All the 1982 issues—bi-monthly—focus on "Sexuality: Forging a Theology."
- Hauerwas, Stanley. *A Community of Character*. Notre Dame, Indiana. Notre Dame Press. 1981.
- Krall, Ruth E. *Anabaptist - Mennonite Perspectives: Contributions to Biblical Interpretation*. Manuscript, 1981.
- Krall, Ruth E. *Sexual Perspectives: Expressions of Femaleness and Maleness*. Manuscript, 1980.

- Kraus, C. Norman. "American Mennonites and the Bible." *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 41 (4), October, 1967, Pp. 309-329.
- Kraus, C. Norman. *Sexuality in the History of the Christian Church*. Updated Manuscript.
- Mace, David R. *The Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution*. Nashville, Tennessee. Abingdon Press. 1970.
- Nelson, James B. *Embodiment*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Augsburg Publishing House. 1978.
- Phipps, William E. *Influential Theologians on Woman*. Washington, D.C. University Press of America. 1980.
- Reuther, Rosemary. "The Personalization of Sexuality." *Christianity and Crisis* 33 (6), April 16, 1973.
- Scanzoni, John. *Sexual Bargaining. Power Politics in the American Marriage*. Second Edition, 1982.
- Schaefer, Anne Wilson. *Women's Reality*. Minneapolis, Minnesota. Winston Press. 1981.
- Stimpson, Catharine R., and Ethel Spector Person, editors. *Women—Sex and Sexuality*, 1980.
- Voice, May 1982. Magazine of Women's Missionary and Service Commission of the Mennonite Church. Articles include "Sexuality and the Family" by Ross T. Bender, "Nurturing Wholesome Sexuality" by Libby Nissley, "Sexuality Begins at Home" by Carol Bauman, "Singleness and Sexuality" by Ruth Krall, "Help Your Children Feel Good about Themselves Sexually" by Ethel Yake Metzler, and "A Message of Great Importance" by (Editor) Vel Shearer. (Box 1245, Elkhart, IN 46515)
- Washbourne, Penelope. "The Religious Dimensions of Sexuality" *Christianity and Crisis* 34 (21), December 9, 1974.

News and Verbs

The human sexuality study committees of the General Conference Mennonite Church and the Mennonite Church had their second joint meeting 15-17 May 1982. **Wilmer Martin** is first chair, **Sue Goerzen** is second chair, **Lois Janzen** is secretary, and **Herta Funk** is project manager. Before the next meeting, in October, writing will be done on: "Theology of the Body and Sexuality" (**Howard Charles** and **Willard Krabill**), "Singleness and Sexuality" (**Wilmer Martin**, **Sue Goerzen**, and **Elsie Steelberg**), "Married Sexuality" (**Naomi Lederach** and **Enos Martin**), "Sexuality of the Formerly Married" (**Enos Martin**), "The Meaning of Celibacy" (**Lois Janzen**), "Masturbation" (**Sue Goerzen**), "Homosexuality" (**Wilmer Martin**, **Sue Goerzen**, and **Elsie Steelberg**), "Other Expressions of Sexuality" (**Willard Krabill**), and "Theology of Christian Experience: Congregational Processes for Working Redemptively" (**David Helmuth**). Persons who feel that they can make contributions to these or other areas of study should contact any of the committees members of denominational staff persons. These include, in addition to those mentioned above: **Kenneth Bauman**, Berne, Indiana; and **Sue Flickinger**, Phoenix, Arizona; and **Vern Preheim**, Newton, Kansas. A catch-all address is c/o Herta Funk, 722 Main, Box 347, Newton, KS 67114.

"Relating Faith and Sexuality" was the title of a 40-participant seminar held in Oak Park, Illinois, last March. Sponsors were the Student and Young Adult Services and the Mennonite Board of Missions.

Bev Holmskog, assistant professor of English at Tabor College, is one of four teaching English listening and conversational skills to college students in Shenyang China, this summer.

Florence E. Horst and **Esther S. Martin** (retirees) and **Esther K. Lehman** (bound for an MCC assignment in Botswana after thirty years of teaching) were honored last spring by Eastern Mennonite College.

Cathy Franz of Neighborhood Church in Visalia, California, has been elected secretary the Church Advisory Council which informs the constituency of Fresno Pacific College.

The Mennonite Hospital-Watson Gailey Eye Foundation Eye Bank Room has been dedicated in memory of **Marie Kaufman**, former head nurse of the wing at Mennonite Hospital, Bloomington, Illinois.

Melita Rempel, Winnipeg, Manitoba, is working with the Louisiana Coalition on Jails and Prisons, the only prisoner advocacy group in the state.

"Through the Eyes of Our Sisters" was the theme of the Saskatchewan Women in Mission annual conference held in Carrot River. **Elsie Flaming** gave a pictorial tour through Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Other speakers were **Elizabeth Enns**, **Frieda Rempel**, **Hilda Epp**, and **Elsie Neufeldt** (president). **Edna Zacharias** was elected to the program committee, and **Tena Siemans** is the new MCC auxiliary representative.

A Canadian Parliamentary Committee has stated that society should give a battered woman "protection as well as the opportunity to gain financial and emotional independence from her partner." It went on to say that both government and private organizations should respond to this need. —*Mennonite Reporter*, 2 May.

Cornelia Lehn, author of *Peace Be With You*, has finished a manuscript of mission and service stories commissioned by Women in Mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church. The book is to be ready for "Bethlehem 1982," joint gathering of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

Janet Crawford, whose New Zealand ordination as a minister of the gospel has not been recognized in England, recently served communion to three Anglican bishops in an interdenominational English chapel not controlled by the Church of England.

Ten years ago **Sally Priesand** became the first woman to be ordained a rabbi in the United States. Now, according to Francine Klagsbrun, there are sixty-one ordained women in the Reform and Reconstructionist movements of the Jewish faith. Also, nineteen women

are cantors, 125 are presidents in the 749 Reform congregations, and sixty-eight are presidents in the 800 Conservative congregations.

The **Sisters of Loretto** have produced a 200-page manual on corporate responsibility. It is available from Interfaith Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, NY, NY 10027.

Winifred Nelson Beechy has authored a book entitled *The New China*; Herald Press is the publisher.

Rachel W. Kreider has been recognized by the Art and History Class of Wadsworth (Ohio) for her research and compilation of several local histories. Her work includes a history of First Mennonite Church of Wadsworth, *Mennonite Cemeteries of Medina County*, and a 135-Amish-family genealogy from 1740 to 1850.

A Mennonite Feminist Spirituality Retreat is being held at Fatima Retreat Center, South Bend, Indiana, August 13-15. **Carol Hull** and **Sister Rose Ann Trzil** will give verbal leadership. **Sandy Wiens, Dorothy Yoder Nyce, Mary Schertz, Ann Schertz, and Jan Lugibihl** are the local planning committee.

Jean Snyder, Goshen, Indiana, is lecturer and head of the music department at Malcolm Moffat Teacher Training College in Serenje, Zambia—this assignment through Mennonite Central Committee.

Ella G. Bauman received Bluffton College's highest honor, the Doctor of Humane Letters, at graduation exercises last May. Dr. Bauman was a career medical missionary in India. One of her current occupations is correspondence with a prisoner "because Jesus loves so much"; the man is in prison for having shot Dr. Bauman's son.

The decision of three Eastern Mennonite College students to study homosexuality for a class in peace and justice last February brought conflict to the campus and also two conclusions: adequate discussion of homosexuality cannot take place without gay persons present, and there is new impetus to overcome ignorance on the subject.

For the first time in the thirty years of mission work in Japan, General Conference Mennonite women met for a spiritual retreat. Sixty women, from Kyushu Island to Hiroshima, and spanning ages 25 to 83 registered. **Joan Wiebe** and **Elsie Flaming**, Women in Mission representatives, helped spark the idea during their 1981 visit. **Takako Yanada, Hisako Shimada, Anna Dyck, and Virginia Claassen** made local plans. Speakers were **Mary Derkson, Miyako Tomimitsu, Alice Ruth Ramseyer, and Mikiko Araki**. The women voted to have another retreat next year. —*Mennonite Reporter*, 31 May.

Helen Benoit, Ruth Lapp Guengerich, Ruth Lehman, Ivonne Rivas, and Sue Schrock were planners of a May conference entitled "A New Look at Old Issues: Women and Men in the 1980s" held at Eastern Mennonite

College. Speakers were **Bertha Beachy**, an EMC alumna and book store manager from Goshen, Indiana, and **Linda Yoder**, Ph.D. candidate in English at West Virginia University.

Linda Schmidt, fresh from an MCC assignment in New Orleans, Louisiana, is the new staff person for the Committee on Women's Concerns, succeeding **Ron Flickinger** who is beginning an assignment in El Salvador. Linda has previously served in the position she is now resuming.

Sue Clemmer Steiner, Elkhart, Indiana, will become the editor of the MCC Committee on Women's Concerns *Report*. The three-year term of current editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley ends in 1982. Sue is a former member of the committee (then, the task force).

Janice Kreider and **Jan Lugibihl** have been appointed General Conference Mennonite representatives on the Committee on Women's Concerns, replacing **Edith Krause** and **Rosie Epp** whose terms are completed in the fall of 1982. Janice and Edith are from Canada; Jan and Rosie are from the United States. (The other committee members are Esther Wiens and Martha Smith Good, Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church respectively, from Canada; and Karen Neufeld and Bertha Beachy, Mennonite Brethren and Mennonite Church respectively, from the United States.)

Mary Schertz, Elkhart, Indiana, will edit "artists' approach to women's concerns," project-in-process of the Committee on Women's Concerns. (See the announcement on the back page.)

Barbara Reber of the Women's Mission and Service Commission and **Lora Oyer** and **Jeannie Zehr** of Women in Mission attended and participated in the May meetings of the Committee on Women's Concerns.

Elaine Somers Rich's manuscript *Mennonite Women 1683-1983: A Story of God's Faithfulness* has gone to press.

Roberta Stoeber, teacher of early childhood education and home economics at Freeman Junior College and Academy, has been selected for inclusion of the 1982 edition of *Outstanding Young Women of America*.

Shirley Dagen Hoover of Harrisonburg, Virginia, and other Mennonite Central Committee workers in Haiti, have begun women's seminars assisted by local *ant-matrices* (encouragers or promoters). A hundred and eighteen women attended the first seminar.

Anne Penner, retired General Conference Mennonite missionary to India, was featured speaker at the 35th Conference of Alberta Women in Mission last May.

Annie Janzen has been given special recognition for her twenty-five years as head cook at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Gary Harder, chair of the CMBC board made the presentation.

A Student Women's Association has begun at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, "to support and encourage women to be responsible." **Melody Yoder** and **Susan Huber** have given leadership to the group.

Milka Planic, the first woman to lead Yugoslavia, has been elected to a four-year term.

Nancy Kerr Williams spoke at a Laurelville Retreat for a gathering of ninety-seven divorced, separated, and widowed persons last spring. This summer Laurelville had a retreat for persons who are raising children without spouses.

Lois Slagle of Pioneer, Ohio, spoke on behalf of single missionaries at a celebration of Africa Inter-Mennonite Missions's seventy years of work.

Marilyn Miller, Arvada, Colorado, gave the commencement address at Bethel College this year.

The late Doris Janzen Longacre's **More-with-Less Cookbook** is being made available in Braille by Minnesota's State Services for the Blind.

The Illinois Mennonite Conference (MC) has approved the ordination of women to the Christian ministry. The executive committee recommendation which passed stated: "In response to a request made by the conference leadership commission relative to the ordination of women to the Christian ministry, the executive committee encourages the leadership commission to ordain all persons (both men and women) according to their God-given gifts in line with the usual licensing and ordination procedures." —*Mennonite Weekly Review*, 10 June

Lois Wilson, moderator of the United Church of Canada, addressed an overflow ecumenical crowd at Bloor Street United Church in connection with the Good Friday liturgy and witness of resistance at the Litton Systems plant in Toronto. A hundred members of the Conrad Grebel College Peace Society and about forty-five additional Mennonites were among the 3,000 present.

The late **Phebe Yoder**, pioneer Mennonite Church missionary to Africa, will be featured in a coming issue of the Lancaster Conference *Missionary Messenger*.

Elsie Gehman was honored last May at the Hampden, Pennsylvania church for forty years of service in the church.

Nancy Heisey Longacre, Akron, Pennsylvania, spoke on the source and quality of wisdom at the ordination of **Mary Mae Schwartzentruber** at Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario. (For Mary Mae's story, see *Report* 43, Focus on Ordination, May-June 1982.)

Daughters of Sarah, a Christian feminist bi-monthly publication, is now paying writers for articles published. Writers' guidelines and a sample copy (send self-addressed stamped envelope and \$1.25) are available from 2716 W. Cortland, Chicago, IL 60647.

Thelma Miller Groff has been appointed co-director of field education and spiritual formation at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. **Gayle Gerber Koontz** and **June Yoder** will teach.

Matilda Kipfer, Elma, New York, was one of the speakers at "Manna 82," an Illinois renewal meeting with the theme "The Word Speaks Today."

Women receiving Mennonite Mental Health scholarships are **Carol J. Farran**, Chicago, Illinois; **Jan Kay Kraus**, Elkhart, Indiana; and **Kathryn Neufeld**, Fresno, California.

Kathryn Aschliman, on sabbatical from Goshen College, is studying how General Conference education alumni develop peacemaking skills among children.

A task force appointed by the Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Conference Family Life Commission has named itself "Task Force on Women in Church and Family." **Connie F. Stauffer** is chair and **Dorcas Miller** is secretary. Other members are **Charolotte Espenshade**, **Miriam Housman**, **Chester Kurtz**, **Ann Ranck**, and **David Thomas**. Tasks outlined are: 1) Communicate with other church groups, 2) Study and assess existing materials, 3) Write documents for study, 4) Encourage congregations to utilize the Leadership and Authority document, 5) List Lancaster Conference women available for roles in the church and conference, 6) Study effects on Lancaster Conference by various movements, 7) Plan seminars, focusing on women in the church, 8) Survey congregations on involvement of women, and 9) Develop a survey to assess constituency needs.

At the Church of the Brethren conference in Wichita in July, **Herta Funk** addressed the CB Women's Caucus on "Mennonite and Feminist: The Ongoing Struggle," and participated in a workshop on single adults.

If you have news or verbs that you would like to share with the other 2,000 readers of Report, send them to me at 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, NE 68516. —Muriel Thiessen Stackley, editor.

Correction

Gordon Houser's statement on inclusive language in the March-April *Report* should read: "The more we know about how existing styles of speech...mold us as speakers, the more we are forced to judge the way society values the styles" (Bolinger, **Aspects of Language**). People often excuse exclusive language by saying that people use words, words don't use people. But this is like saying that people use guns, guns don't use people...

Letters

Dear Herta: The American Cancer Society has some very simple educational filmstrips on topics such as the breast self-examination and the pelvic exam and Pap Smear. I found these very helpful for one-to-one education. They also offer films on these same issues which I would recommend for larger group viewing. One book

which I found very helpful for general body/health consciousness-raising and education on this topic is **Our Bodies, Ourselves** by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. The book has a rather radical feminist leaning—and consequent underlying philosophy which I personally do not totally appreciate. However, I feel the factual information given and issues covered are useful and pertinent to the women's health issue. — *Diane Kropf, Harleysville, Pennsylvania (18 May 1982).*

Dear Muriel: I'm back in Harrisonburg settling in at my office-apartment after five months in Toledo, Ohio, as interim pastor at Bancroft Mennonite Church. The experience was one of the best chapters in my life in spite of the heavy responsibility.

To correct the item in the May-June 1982 "News and Verbs," while serving as interim pastor at Bancroft Mennonite Church, Toledo, Ohio, I did not deliver a sermon at Ohio Conference (Mennonite Church) but had the worship period preceding Marlin Miller's message, "Women in Church Ministries."

Marlin's content and manner of presentation plus his respectful way of answering a rather critical brother during discussion and later one-to-one conversation, showed the way to work for necessary change. As I see it, it released the brother to think straighter and act better! He actually told a friend of mine, "My eyes have been opened." At least some people are able to rethink the question of women in church ministries. — *Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, Harrisonburg, VA (5 July 1982)*

Dear Muriel: I fail to see the problem with "language." It does not bother me. I see no need to speak of the "motherhood of God." In fact, I rather like the idea of the word "man" standing for mankind in a general sense, and the use (as in the Bible) of the pronouns "Him" and "His" referring to God. — *Adah B. Wenger, Goshen, IN (31 May)*

Announcements

The sixth Women in Ministry Conference will convene 15-17 October 1982 at Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, Kitchener, Ontario, the first to be held in Canada. A local planning committee with Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ representation is planning the program and arranging the hosting. Information can be had from Ed Kauffman, 74 Erb's Road East, St. Agatha, Ontario, N0B 2L0.

The MCC Peace Section Committee on Women's Concerns has, in the past, responded to issues of women in church and society through scholarly research and study papers. The committee is now soliciting creative responses to the same concerns in the form of short stories, poetry, drama, ink sketches, songs, and black/white photos for publication in "artists' approach to women's concerns." Please send your submissions by 1 September 1982 to Esther Wiens, Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 77 Henderson Highway, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L1.

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Peace and the Power of the Housewife, September-October, 1982, Edith Krause and Muriel Thiessen Stackley, coordinators;

Two-career Marriages, November-December 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator;

Nurturing Children, January-February 1983, Karen Neufeld, coordinator;

Women Mystics and Devotional Life, March-April 1983, Esther Wiens, coordinator.

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

* To subscribe send address to:
(subscription is free)

* To change or correct your address, please send your old address with your correct address to:

MCC

21 S 12th St
Akron, PA 17501

(Allow 2-4 weeks for address change.)

MCC

Mennonite
Central
Committee



21 South 12th Street
Akron
Pennsylvania
17501
U.S.A.

**Address
correction
requested**

2nd Class
U.S. Postage

PAID

Akron, PA 17501